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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/Russia, Palestinian
Elections, Kyoto Protocol, Lebanon, Iraq (1/31-2/1)

11. Summary: Syrian papers reported President Asad's meeting with Yuri N. Baluyevsky, Russian Chief of Staff, which dealt with enhancing bilateral relations and with the latest regional and international developments. Papers also reported the joint press conference held by the Russian Chief-of-Staff and his Syrian counterpart, Lieutenant General Ali Habib. The latter said that "Syria adheres to its rights and will defend them, relying on international legitimacy, relevant resolutions and the support of its friends, foremost among them the Russian Federation." Ali depicted ties between the two armies as long-standing and solid. For his part, the Russian Chief-of-Staff underlined the importance of respecting the sovereignty of other states and the right of peoples to choose the life they want, hailing the distinguished national bond in Syria and the rallying of its people around the leadership of President Asad. "This is an element of strength for Syria that helps it face pressure and threats," the Russian Chief of Staff said.

Papers reported a SANA press release saying that Syria would propose that Arab nations compensate Palestinians for any aid Western powers might cut after the HAMAS victory in the Palestinian elections. SANA quoted FM Shara as saying that Syria would submit the proposal at the Arab summit scheduled for March in Khartoum. "The move comes within the framework of continuous Arab support for the Palestinian people, and the respect of its will and choices," SANA said.

Papers also reported that Faisal Miqdad, Syria's Permanent Envoy to the United Nations, presented to the UN SecGen Syria's Act of Accession to the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Changes, 1997. The act stated that Syria's accession to the protocol does not signify, in any case, recognition of Israel and will not lead to any dealings with it whatsoever.

End summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad discusses bilateral relations and enhancement of regional and international developments with the Russian Chief of Staff" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 2/1)

"A Syrian draft resolution to the Arab summit to continue Arab aid to the Palestinian people" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 2/1)

"Clashes continue in the Palestinian territories. Two Palestinians martyred in Jenin. HAMAS rejects Western blackmail: A long ceasefire and no recognition of Israel" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 12/1)

"Syria's Permanent Envoy to the United Nations Faisal Migdad presents the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan Syria's Act of Accession to the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 2/1)

"HAMAS calls for a neutral and open dialogue with the Quartet. Abbas reiterates the importance of continuing international aid to Palestinians" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 1/31)

"Putin calls for not stopping aid to Palestinians, confirming that his country's position on HAMAS' victory is different from the West's" (Government-owned Tishreen, 2/1)

"Ministers of the Amal Movement and Hizbollah: US pressures are behind the cabinet crisis" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 2/1)

"One British soldier killed, three injured in Basra. Al-Dulaymi calls on the government to release detained Iraqi women" (Government-owned Tishreen, 2/1)

"Iran warns against internationalizing its nuclear file. Paris: The door of diplomacy is still open" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 2/1)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Political Cross-eye?"

Muhammad Khair al-Jammali, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, said (1/31): "American and European reactions to HAMAS' election victory entail distortion of reality and distortion of facts, as they portray Israel as a peace dove and blame the obstruction of peace and the loss of opportunities for peace on the Palestinian people and their resistance groups, who stick to their weapons to protect their people and defend their security and survival...."

"Those who reject the results of the Palestinian elections are political hypocrites, as they forget that Israel has adopted terrorism as official policy and that it has never recognized the legitimate Palestinian right of return, the establishment of an independent state, and the restoration of Jerusalem...."

"Israel's policy of aggression, destruction, settlement, and denial of Palestinian rights is the reason for the deadlock in the peace process on the Palestinian track...."

"HAMAS and the Challenge of Administering Palestinian Affairs"

Muhammad al-Khadr, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Ba'th, wrote (1/31): "HAMAS' Political Bureau chief Khalid Mashaal called on all Palestinian factions to participate in the next government...."

"The new Legislative Council has major missions to accomplish, as expected by Palestinian citizens, who were exhausted by Israeli sieges and aggression and the entrenchment of corruption and poverty. The effort must start by putting the domestic front

and decision-making establishments in order. It should address daily living concerns and secure the salaries of about 120,000 employees, whose management has moved from one political force to another. There are other complicated issues, such as border crossing points, economic development, security and order, negotiations, and the fate of previously signed agreements.

"This is a mission too difficult for any one faction or political force to shoulder. It dictates collective participation, as called for by Mashaal...."

"Another Weapon in the Hands of the People"

Dr. Khalaf al-Jarrad, chief editor of government-owned Tishreen, commented (1/31): "The HAMAS victory in the Palestinian elections was a political disaster for Israel...."

"Washington only supports democracy that does not allow political forces hostile to the United States and its allies to rise to power...."

"As for the Arab region, the American policy toward the issue of democracy is organically linked to the consolidation of trends that support separation and fragmentation, seek help from foreigners, and adopt the concepts of peace and normalization with the Zionist entity, regardless of this entity's aggression, expansionist ideology, displacement of millions of Palestinians, public refusal to comply with international resolutions, and occupation of Palestine, the Syrian Golan, Shebaa Farms, and other Lebanese villages...."

"What has happened in Venezuela, Brazil, Iran, Chile, and Palestine points to strong popular inclinations and proves that democracy is not a ready-made commodity that can be imported...."

"We must be optimistic that the time of hegemony, dictates, and coercion has begun to stagger, fall, and disappear."

"Deeds More Important than Words"

Omar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, said (1/31): "The most important result of the Palestinian elections is that it revealed the truth about those who claim to support democracy in the West and their true position toward democracy when it does not match their deviant ideas and double standards...."

"These people cannot claim that HAMAS' victory in elections obstructed the peace process because this process was nominal only, and ineffective, as Sharon's government aborted all its requirements...."

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